

What About A Threeway? by gala_apples

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Summary:

For six months, the most excitement Chief Hopper experiences is Friday night drunkards, teaching El a new word each day, and dating Joyce at the same time that Bob is dating Joyce. And then it's Halloween, and everything blows up in his face.

What About A Threeway?

Author's Note:

- For [libraralien](#).

I hope you enjoy this, earlgreymanatee! Initially it was going to be longer and much much smuttier, but I went from being unemployed to having a 9 hour daily shift with a 2 hour commute, so I had to trim it down.

As much as it's something that will never come up during casual chat at the station, there are a lot of benefits to dating a woman who's dating two men. The primary one being when Jim has to go back to the cabin after work because El had a bad evening and needs someone, he's not just leaving Joyce hanging. Bob has much more ability to drop things and run at a phone call. And sadly that kind of support is needed, what with Will still not quite being normal. He'll probably always be a little gun shy - though Jim hopes when it's safe and he can let Will and El meet, they can find support in each other. Until then it's a rough juggle. Especially considering he can't exactly tell them he has a hidden kid he's supporting too. Instead he's forced to take on the role of the flake, the ex-addict who still can't quite hold on to things properly.

Sometimes though, on the best nights, there's time for all three of them to get together. It's all strictly platonic when the kids are still awake, of course. Jim's pretty sure the kid likes them both. When he's not jumpy, he's an affable little thing. The teen radiates suspicion at all times, the attitude of an outcast stewing in his own juices. The best thing for Jonathan would be to get the fuck out of Hawkins, get into some niche liberal college where Arts majors are celebrated. Despite the nearly visible misgivings, Jim doubts he has any concept of what's going on. Kid like that? If he knew he'd have some sort of snarky wisdom to impart.

Once Jonathan and Will are in their rooms for the night, all it takes is one good action to get the three of them into Joyce's bed. Maybe it's Bob putting his hand on Joyce's knee. Maybe it's Joyce casually-not-

casually mentioning she washed her sheets recently. Or maybe it's him, finally unbuttoning all the buttons of his uniform shirt and getting down to just white undershirt. Whatever the prompt, the other two capitulate immediately, every time. It's a bit risqué, but it still fits firmly into the boundaries of acceptability. Joyce acts as a perfect barrier between them, second only to the mental barrier of *not that way*. The no touching routine is almost like swinging -a practice done for ages and made acceptable by history- or at least some version of it. Being a homo is a-whole-nother realm of trouble.

It's not that Jim hates himself for thinking men can be as good looking as women. He hates himself, yes. Obviously. But that's about being unable to save Sara, about ruining things with Diane, about the fucked up shit he had to do in Vietnam, about how El deserves a better dad than he can be. The bisexuality thing is just... whatever. That said, he's a smart enough man to know most would most definitely not feel the same way. He's hardly going to take a risk with Joyce and Bob thinking it's disgusting and kicking him to the curb. Better to accept what he can get; occasional meals with Joyce, and rare threeway movie nights with very careful positioning once they make it into Joyce's bed.

After about six months of co-dating -or more, depending on who's definition of first date is being used- things rapidly devolve into the 'worse' part of the relationship vow 'for better or worse'. A lot of fucking shit happens in the space of about forty eight hours around Halloween, ranging from realising how scary a temper tantrum from a girl with psychic abilities can be, to being nearly crushed to death by evil sentient vines.

The worst of it peaks at waiting outside Hawkins Lab with Will in his arms, hoping that soft, gentle Bob can make his way out of a monster filled labyrinth without any help. Jim hates feeling out of control. Standing idly by isn't just terrible, it's agony.

And he nearly *doesn't* make it out. Bob comes barreling into the lobby like his ass is on fire, and then he stops, the moment he spots Joyce. Jim's seen shit like that, in 'Nam. Seen men so grateful to be safely back at base that they don't see the trap that's been set, seen men die with an assured smile still on their faces. Jim isn't about to let it happen again. The instant Bob stops, Jim throws his body against the

glass door and bellows “run!” A simple prompt, but enough to get Bob’s ass back in gear. Crucial, as it turns out, because five seconds after that, the demodog bursts through the wooden door like it’s tissue, and its disgusting venus flytrap mouth opens to take a bite out of its prey. A horrible scream of pain stabs Jim in the chest in the seconds it takes to roughly drop Will to the sidewalk -a bruised hip hardly the biggest of the boy’s issues- but Bob keeps running, an ugly limping stride, head ducked to give Jim the room to pump the fucking monster full of bullets.

They make it back to the Byers’ house, along with a collection of idiot teenagers and children, relatively intact. For all the speeding, no one crashes. Despite the severe lack of seat belts, no one goes flying out the windshield. Bob leaves a pool of blood in the floor of the car, but considering Will is currently inhabited by a demon or some shit, Jim’s classifying that as a tomorrow problem. Steve provides shoulder support for a badly hobbling Bob until they get inside. Then the man collapses in the nearest chair; a kitchen chair Dustin ran to get out of desperation to be helpful. Jim’s interested in the kind of man Dustin’s going to grow up to be, if they make it through the night alive.

“You need stitches,” Nancy tells Bob. Jim knows Bob needs more than that. If nothing else, there must be green cloth fibres embedded in the wound. He can’t say what course of antibiotics might help combat dirty monster saliva.

Bob shakes his head, the picture of a war weary man. “Tomorrow. Once Will is safe.”

“Can anyone else manage first aid? I have to start calling people.”

Nancy and Lucas step up, both claiming to know how, so Jim retreats to the kitchen to start trying to nail the situation down. Unfortunately it turns out every living person on the planet is completely goddamn useless, excepting the people in this house. The kids blather about their dumb DnD game to the point of excruciation, but it ends up prompting the idea of an interrogation, and that is an idea that actually goes somewhere. It’s an idea that ends in a concrete task: close the gate, and whether or not it shows on his face, it’s such a fucking relief to know what to do next.

The roller coaster of feelings hardly stops there, though. Like the world is a good enough place for Jim's mind to settle on relieved. Instead the fucking phone rings, followed by the demodogs swarming the house, followed by his brilliant adopted daughter killing them all, followed by realising he was so busy with his job he missed her running the fuck away. By the time they're in the mine elevator, him shooting the shit out of any demodog daring enough to come at them while El seals the gate, Jim's primary emotion is exhaustion. It's been a hell of a fucking weekend.

He drives back to the Byers house one handed. His other hand is firmly curled into his daughter's. He could go home, to the cabin, but someone should check up on Steve and the kids, abandoned by the adults with tasks to complete. Besides, he's pretty confident in saying that's where Joyce and Bob and Will and the teens plan to regroup too. For lack of a better option, the Byers house has become the base for weird shit happening.

Jim is grateful to see Will on the couch, still wet with sweat, but very actively conversing with all the friends the Mind Flayer had made him forget. He's less thrilled about how Harrington is beat to shit, and even *less* when he finds out why. Bob being gone is a disappointment, but understandable. Even a man who works at Radio Shack, a fully civilian career, doesn't want to lose a leg to sepsis. Steve and Nancy trickle out eventually, as do Max and Lucas and Dustin. Jim isn't surprised in the least that Mike is planning to stay the night, permission not asked for. He's a bit surprised in his own leniency, letting El join the impromptu sleepover, but fuck it. The window is boarded up from where El flung a demodog through it, so there won't be any nosy neighbours reporting a Russian spy child to his idiot deputies.

With El camped out on Will's bedroom floor, Jim's hardly going home. He promises to sleep on the couch, to give Joyce some space to decompress. After all, that's part of what went wrong with Diane; getting too close to her in all the wrong ways. Joyce calls him an idiot, and gets a bright blue blanket from the linen closet. It's one of the few that weren't used to line the shed, colour too distinctive to risk it. He lays back on the sofa half twisted, back tucked into the edge for support so Joyce can nestle against his chest. Together they

rest, too edgy from the hyper vigilance to actually fall asleep, bodies too weary to bother with a VHS or the television.

The knock on the door around midnight has them both leaping to their feet. Stupid, really. Like a fucking demodog would *knock*. And yet, Jim answers the door with his hand on his gun, because he can't not.

It's Bob. It's Bob in ridiculous heart patterned boxer shorts, and a leg that's more gauze bandage than skin. It's Bob, and Jim's heart is swelling with love, and it's so stupid, because it's not like he didn't already know he was alive, was going to be fine. It shouldn't be hitting him like this.

"I was hoping someone would be up," he says as his greeting. Bob's smiling as sweetly as apple pie. Somehow that's the last straw for Jim. He just fuckin' snaps.

Jim's fingers sink into the thin fabric of the teal scrubs shirt Bob's still wearing, and pulls him closer. It's unfair, maybe, to be yanking him around bodily, when the yard of stitches he must have has him keeping almost all his weight on one foot. Jim doesn't care about fair. He cares about Bob's body close enough to his that he can feel the chill of his skin through fabric. He cares about bending down at the same time as he's tugging Bob up, and after five and a half months of struggling to abstain, *finally* getting his lips on Bob's.

"Um."

As far as interruptions go, it could be much worse. It could be one of the kids voices, instead of Joyce's. Or it could be a scream of revulsion. Or it could even be physical, someone flying into a disgust-based rage and shoving him away. Intellectually Jim knows confusion is close to a best case scenario. He still hates that a single syllable is enough to break him and Bob apart.

"What's going on?"

Jim doesn't know how he's supposed to answer Joyce's question. Equally important, how does he answer Bob's prolonged silence? "What do you want me to say? I like you both. I just got away from

me.” He can’t quite bring himself to apologise for it, the moment of his willpower collapsing, but he can make a promise that he knows they’ll want to hear. The alternative is Joyce breaking up with him, and he really doesn’t want that. “Won’t happen again.”

“It should.”

Now it’s Jim’s turn to be confused. He turns his head back to Bob, who’s *still* standing on the porch, just on the other side of the door frame. “What?”

“If I wasn’t doing it because I didn’t think you’d like it, and you weren’t doing it, because I guess you thought I wouldn’t? Shouldn’t we just both do it?”

“What?” He has to ask again. Not only is Jim currently low on brainpower for which to dissect poor phrasing, Bob has never before now given any inkling that he’s interested in him. Okay, it’s true that Jim’s also tried his best to keep a poker face at all times, but he’s been a soldier, and a cop. Bob’s a softer breed.

Joyce chimes in, in nearly the tone of a mother solving the problem of a dumb child. Jim might resent it, if it didn’t feel apt. “Kiss him now. Worry about what it means for your manhood later.”

“Fuck off,” Jim replies with only a little heat. “I know exactly what kind of man I am, and it has nothing to do with kissing Elliot Saunders in junior year.”

Joyce squeals, momentarily transported back to high school. “So he was gay! Everyone said he gave handjobs behind the track and field stands. Did he-”

“Is that relevant right now?”

“It is if you’re going to give Bob a handjob. You could. He’s only wearing boxers.”

Bob laughs. “If you’re gonna, can I come inside? You know, before I come, inside?”

“Puns will get you nowhere, Newby.”

“Sure. Okay. But seriously, it’s November, in Indiana. I’m freezing my butt off.”

Jim takes the few steps back needed to let Bob come in, but still need to rub against him as he does so. Forgive him, but now that contact is allowed, he can’t imagine it getting old for a while. He begins to head back to the living room. He’s hoping for exactly what Joyce suggested; cuddling on the couch with Bob in the middle, coital endorphins wiping away the pain of his leg as Joyce makes out with him and Jim strokes his cock. He’s almost to the couch when he realises neither of them are behind him. Jim whips around to see both of them at the entrance to the hallway, holding hands. Joyce crooks her head in a gesture of beckoning, and Jim makes it to them in a few quick strides.

It’s not the first time he’s been in Joyce’s bedroom with two gorgeous naked people. It’s not even the tenth. It is, however, the first time Jim’s been able to reach for Bob, and maneuver him to be in the middle of the bed. It’s not like he plans to ignore Joyce. Who’s going to eat her out until her eyes leak tears, if not him? But there’s a hot novelty to actually touching the other man in the room, and if Joyce’s filthy leer is anything to go by, she’s okay with the show.

Bob in real life isn’t quite the God of Jim’s occasional jerk off fantasies. For one thing, he smells like many layers of dried sweat, with an overlayer of hospital funk. For another, when Jim daydreams about this, the height difference always magically disappears. In reality, they don’t quite match up perfectly. Lucky for them, they’ve got six months of experience in intimacy with a smaller partner. Joyce is the definition of a tiny firecracker; five foot two, and full of energy. Even now she’s rolling her hips, riding Bob’s face like she hasn’t been fighting a war the whole weekend.

Sometimes Jim wonders if the allure of this for Joyce is a size difference kink. She’s so petite, so tiny against their tall thick frames. Sitting on Bob, hands braced on the wall, her head barely clears the headboard. Maybe she likes feeling surrounded, like nothing can get her. There’s a sort of sensuality in being comfortable. Jim gets it, from a different angle. To him, Bob and Joyce can never be as sexy as when they’re in worn in pajamas, feet propped up on something. He’s never actually asked her if his guess is right. Whys, in a complicated

relationship like theirs? It just seems like a bad idea.

For the first time in years, Jim is blowing a man he knows the last name of. It matters, more than he thought it would. Normally when he gives someone head, he likes hearing their reactions, knowing which trick of the mouth really does it for them. That, of course, isn't an option now. A fact no one tells you in the nine months before childbirth: you'll get very good at having silent sex. There are four minors in the house, Bob isn't exactly about to start bellowing like a buffalo. Any other situation and the quiet would throw Jim off his game. As it is now, he knows what these clenched fingers mean, what those thighs taut with tension mean. Jim can be proud of what he's doing to Bob, just like he's proud of Bob for what he's doing to Joyce. Another thing no one tells you in your honeymoon phase; protectiveness and awe of your beloved can stretch wider. He's grateful to have figured that out himself.

Jim knows how this moment will end. Namely, orgasms for all, and a careful collection of fluids, because it's usually Jonathan doing the laundry after he gets home from school. He knows how this night will end. He'll get redressed in his dirty, dried crunchy with sweat clothes and nap on the couch, where whomever gets up first in the morning will expect to see him. Bob will go home, and sleep there for a few hours, before jovially coming over with a breakfast of Dunkin Donuts for everyone. He has no idea what will happen after that, what will happen with this new thing they've just started. All Jim can say for sure is that the curse 'may you live in interesting times' doesn't always need to feel like a curse.